United Nations A/C.4/53/SR.23

# General Assembly
Fifty-third session

Official Records

Distr.: General
5 March 1999
English
Original: Russian

**Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)**

**Summary record of the 23rd meeting**
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 19 November 1998, at 11 a.m.

*Chairman*: Mr. Çarikçi (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Turkey)
*later*: Mr. Macedo (Chairman) ..... (Mexico)

## Contents

Agenda item 84: Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories (*continued*)

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

98-83557 (E)

*In the absence of Mr. Macedo (Mexico), Mr. Çarikçi (Turkey), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.*

*The meeting was called to order at 11.10 a.m.*

**Agenda item 84: Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories** (*continued*) (A/53/136 and Add.1, A/53/259, A/53/260, A/53/264, A/53/660, A/53/661; A/C.4/53/L.16–L.20)

1. **Mr. Ka** (Senegal) said that the debate on the report of the Special Committee was taking place at a particularly good time, following the recent signing of the Wye River Memorandum between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. Much still remained to be done, however, especially in terms of improving the living conditions of the Palestinians in the occupied territories. As was noted in the report, the Israeli forces continued to restrict and violate the rights of the Palestinian population in the occupied territories and the Syrian Golan. In recent months, a number of illegal measures had been taken that were aimed, in particular, at changing the demographic composition of the occupied territories through the construction of new settlements or the expansion of existing settlements, including some in East Jerusalem.

2. In a short period of time, the Arab population of East Jerusalem had become the minority as a result of the establishment of Jewish settlements there and the expulsion of Palestinians, the destruction of their homes, the confiscation of their property and the denial of their right to reunite their families. If, in addition, one considered the frequent violations of the human rights of the Palestinian and Arab population, the severe conditions under which members of that population were held in custody and the frequent closures of Palestinian territory, it was easy to understand how difficult it was for the Palestinian population to hold on to the optimism and hope engendered by the various peace agreements that had been concluded since 1991. As the Wye River Memorandum opened up new prospects, the United Nations — which bore the chief responsibility for settling the Palestinian crisis — and the co-sponsors of the peace process must do whatever was necessary to build confidence and establish peace in the region. It was more important now than ever before to implement the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions on the question of Palestine. The Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949, must be applied to all the territories that had been occupied since 1967, in accordance with resolution ES-10/4 adopted by the General Assembly at its tenth emergency special session if peace and security were to be re-established in the Middle East, it was essential that the interested parties, with support from the international community, should continue, guided by the demands of reason and through dialogue, to seek a peaceful settlement to the question of Palestine that would respect the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, the dignity of the population of the occupied territories and the rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination and to establish their own State.

3. **Ms. Abdelhady-Nasser** (Palestine), noting the relevance of the report of the Special Committee, said that the continued Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and the desperate situation of the Palestinian people continued to constitute the main feature of the situation in the Middle East. During the period under consideration, the General Assembly, at its tenth emergency special session, had twice considered the question of Israel's continuing violations of the rules of international law in the occupied territory and, in particular, the issue of illegal settlements. Like resolutions ES-10/2 and ES-10/3, resolutions ES-10/4 and ES-10/5 which clearly reflected the position of the international community on the question, had been adopted by overwhelming majorities. Also, steps had been taken towards the convening of a conference of the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 on measures to enforce the Convention in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and to ensure its respect in accordance with common article 1. With regard to the illegal construction of a settlement at Jabal Abu Ghneim to the south of occupied East Jerusalem, the Israeli Government had concluded the phase related to the building of the infrastructure in total disregard of the resolutions that had been adopted. The Israeli authorities had recently even invited tenders for the construction of housing units in the settlement.

4. The current Israeli Government had maintained its stranglehold on the Palestinian economy. In that connection, it resorted to illegal actions, including the imposition of closures and restrictions on the freedom of movement of persons and goods, which had caused a severe deterioration in the living conditions of the Palestinian people. Such measures of collective punishment not only violated the freedom of movement; they also violated the freedoms of worship and education and were leading to the dismemberment of the territorial integrity of Palestine. Furthermore, the Israeli Government was continuing its campaign to judaize occupied East Jerusalem by making changes to its legal status, character and demographic composition, and was abrogating the right of the Palestinian

residents of Jerusalem to live in their city by illegally confiscating their identity cards. The demolition of homes and the imposition of curfews and administrative detention had also continued. Palestinian political prisoners in Israeli prisons continued to be subject to torture and other forms of ill-treatment and human rights violations. All those Israeli practices were in blatant violation of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949, which applied to all the occupied Palestinian territories, including Jerusalem. The Security Council had adopted 25 resolutions in which it affirmed the applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention to the territories which Israel had occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem. Nevertheless, Israel had for over three decades continued to violate the Convention. Palestine believed it was imperative that the Israeli Government should accept the *de jure* applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention and fully implement its provisions.

5. The signing of the Wye River Memorandum between the two sides on 23 October 1998 had given grounds for hope that the situation would soon improve. However, the Israeli Government had chosen not to proceed down that path. With the Government's permission, Jewish settlers had resumed work in the heart of the Arab sector of Jerusalem, at Ras al-Amud. In addition, Israeli officials had announced the building of 200 housing units on the edge of a Jewish settlement in Al-Khalil (Hebron). Further, the confiscation of Palestinian land, the exploitation and theft of natural resources, the transfer of more settlers into the occupied territory and construction of by-pass roads for the settlers had persisted. In that connection, it should be noted that the peace process would continue to suffer as long as Israel continued to violate the rules of international law and international humanitarian law and the relevant resolutions of the United Nations. Compliance with those rules and resolutions was a necessary condition for progress in the peace process and for a genuine improvement in the living conditions and the human rights situation of the Palestinian people. In conclusion, she expressed great regret with regard to the continued refusal by the Israeli authorities to cooperate with the Special Committee, despite the fact that the United Nations had a permanent responsibility for the question of Palestine until such time as a comprehensive settlement was achieved.

6. **Mr. Zohar** (Israel) informed the Committee that, on 18 November 1998 at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Israel in Jerusalem, negotiations on the final status agreement between Israel and its Palestinian neighbours had begun. The delegations to the talks were headed by Mr. Sharon and Mr. Abu Mazen. Following the ratification of the Wye River Memorandum by the Knesset, implementation was already under way.

7. The annual report of the Special Committee once again showed that it was a propaganda exercise held annually at the expense of the United Nations and, indeed, at the cost of the cause of peace. The only redeeming feature of the report was the brief preambular reference to the Declaration of Principles signed by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1993 and to subsequent bilateral agreements. The key to peace lay in the pursuit of truth, not in the repetition of unsubstantiated insinuations. As had been noted in the past, the very title of the Committee "to Investigate Israeli Practices" had a negative ring, and its draft resolutions were unacceptable to Israel in that they prejudged the issue. The Arab side conveniently forgot that since 1948 Israel had sought peace but had for decades been the victim of Arab practices, of terrorism and outright aggression from the Arab side. The problems of the Palestinian refugees would not have occurred if Israel had not been invaded by five States at the time of its foundation. Even now, as the previous speaker's statement had shown, the campaign of slander and hatred continued in the press, on the air and even in school textbooks in the Arab world.

8. He noted with appreciation in that context the constructive approach of Europe, as set out in the statement by the representative of Austria. The political process in the Middle East was proceeding on the basis of a series agreements which were in mid-implementation, and ongoing negotiations. Israel had already transferred to a Palestinian autonomous body *de facto* authority over and responsibility for more than 98 per cent of the Palestinian population of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Its powers included legislative, judicial and executive authority over all civil aspects of government. In fact, the Palestinian authority had responsibility for internal affairs, education, culture, employment, health, insurance, labour relations, social security, agriculture, local government, public works, housing, the civil registry, statistics and the treasury. It must exercise those powers in accordance with internationally accepted norms. In accordance with the Interim Agreement and pending the completion of the negotiating process, Israel remained responsible for exercising the powers and discharging the duties not transferred to the Palestinians. Those included external security and, to some degree, internal security and public order in areas where those powers were not within the purview of the Palestinian Authority.

9. The territorial scope of autonomy, as well as the character and content of the various powers and responsibilities, were constantly subject to change. In

accordance with the Wye River Memorandum, in the next few weeks, an additional portion of territory would be transferred to Palestinian jurisdiction and actual control. Israel had made real concessions in that regard without receiving from the other side such tangible and irreversible guarantees in exchange. Nevertheless, Israel was determined to go forward with the process for the sake of peace and the security of future generations. It was fully aware of the dangers of unconditionally transferring actual powers and responsibilities without securing guarantees of respect for the human rights of all the inhabitants of the territories. Israel did not need to be reminded of the importance of including in the agreements with its Palestinian partners provisions to guarantee such rights pending the completion of the negotiations on the permanent status of that area. To that end, after lengthy negotiations, a text had been drafted for an article entitled "Human rights and the rule of law" (article XIX) in the Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Israel hoped that, through the provisions of that article, the protection of human rights could be guaranteed during the interim period pending the achievement of a final settlement, for the benefit of all individuals in that area.

10. The document on Israeli practices dwelt at great length on conflicts, without referring once to the efforts undertaken to heal the wounds of conflict. The Centre for International Cooperation, a department within the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, had developed a close relationship with the Palestinian Authority. In 1997, in cooperation with the Palestinian departments of planning, international cooperation, agriculture and health, as well as local non-governmental organizations, it had arranged for approximately 700 Palestinian professionals to study in courses in Israel. Most of those courses had been designed with the participation of Palestinians, taking their needs into consideration. In addition, a joint research project was currently being undertaken by the Israeli Bar-Ilan University and the Palestinian Multiculturalism and Language Centre. The first Palestinian doctor was currently studying in a year-long course leading to a master's degree in public health at the Hadassah hospital in Jerusalem. At the graduation ceremony of 29 Palestinian students from the occupational therapy faculty in Raanana, on the occasion of the establishment of a joint Israeli-Palestinian secretariat for environmental health, the Director-General of the Palestinian Council of Health, Dr. Hikmat Ajuri, commended the cooperation between Israelis and Palestinians in the field of health. Those and numerous other examples of good-neighbourly relations between Israelis and Palestinians should counteract to some extent the negative slant of the report, which, it was to be hoped, would in the following year be more balanced, comprehensive and objective in its presentation of the facts. Israelis and Palestinians would continue their constructive cooperation despite all attempts to hinder the peace process through ill-intentioned and biased propaganda.

11. **Mr. Dausa** (Cuba) said that, for the people and Government of Cuba, showing solidarity with the Palestinian people was a question of principle. Such solidarity was expressed through support for the efforts undertaken to realize all the legitimate and inalienable rights of that long-suffering people. The reports by the Special Committee were most commendable. They cited numerous unfortunate instances of violations of the most basic rights of the Palestinian people and other Arabs in the occupied territories. They described the Israeli policy of building settlements, the confiscation of land, the closure of the territories, the harsh treatment of prisoners and detainees, the situation of children, the conditions in the field of health in the occupied territories and the general economic situation, amongst others. Cuba fully shared the desire of the international community to resolve the problems affecting the countries of the Middle East, and, in particular, to achieve a final settlement of the Palestinian problem, for there could be no just and lasting peace as long as the Palestinian people and other Arabs in the occupied territories were deprived of the opportunity to exercise their basic rights effectively. The international community must therefore strongly reiterate its demand that Israel cease its illegal practices and guarantee the exercise by the Arabs of their rights.

12. One of the most important aspects of the problem was connected with the applicability of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of 12 August 1949. The Security Council had adopted 25 resolutions confirming the principle of the applicability of that Convention in the occupied territories, including Jerusalem. Israel, however, had yet to accept that principle. It must be recalled that, in the past year, the General Assembly had held three meetings during its tenth emergency special session to consider the explosive situation engendered by the Israeli Government's decision to begin construction of a settlement south of East Jerusalem. In the resolutions adopted at that session, the General Assembly had recommended the convening of a conference of the High Contracting Parties to the Geneva Convention to consider measures to ensure the Convention's application in the occupied Palestinian territories, including Jerusalem, and compliance with it in accordance with article 1. His delegation noted in that connection the initiative of the Swiss

Government, in its capacity as depositary of the Geneva Convention, to convene a meeting of experts, which had taken place in October 1998, to consider the general problems related to the application of the Convention, particularly in the occupied territories. Cuba wished to reiterate its call for the convening of the aforementioned conference in accordance with resolutions ES-10/3, ES-10/4 and ES-10/5, adopted at the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly.

13. The signing of the agreements in Madrid and Oslo had revived hopes that the Palestinian problem would soon be resolved and peace established in the region. At the same time, many obstacles continued to be encountered along the difficult path to peace. In connection with the recent signing of the new agreement, there was again talk to the effect that the Special Committee's work no longer fulfilled any purpose, yet it was precisely the full and timely implementation of that agreement that would testify to a genuine desire to make peace. Until a final solution to the problem was attained and the most basic rights of the Palestinian and other Arabs in the occupied territories were fully respected, the Special Committee must continue its important work in fulfilment of its mandate.

14. **Mr. Osei** (Ghana) said that the report of the Special Committee contained detailed information on policies and practices of the Israeli Government which infringed the norms of international humanitarian law, and particularly the provisions of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of 12 August 1949, as well as international human rights standards, such as the provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the international human rights covenants. The threats to Israel's security could scarcely be used to justify a deliberate policy of land expropriation, restriction of land use, damage to the environment, burial in the occupied territories of nuclear waste, harassment of women and children, expelling persons from their homes and destruction of those homes, unjust arrests detention and torture, and restriction of the freedom of movement, amongst other measures. His delegation noted with satisfaction the approval by the Knesset on 17 November 1998 of the Wye River Memorandum. The endorsement of the "land for peace" principle should dictate a full commitment to the implementation by all parties of the provisions of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978). His delegation also noted with satisfaction that Israeli-Palestinian negotiations on the final status agreement had just begun in Jerusalem.

15. **Mr. Keene** (United States of America) said that the United States Government believed that the resolutions under agenda item 84 did not reflect current reality and did not contribute to the peace process. The Wye River Memorandum, signed on 23 October 1998, represented a major step forward in the peace process. Once all of the provisions of the Memorandum were implemented, the parties would enter into permanent status talks. It was the responsibility of the members of the Fourth Committee to assist in building momentum for a renewal of confidence, and not to lessen it. The United States called upon Member States to delete the standard request for the Special Committee to continue its work and report the following year. It was time to recognize that the Special Committee's existence was inconsistent with the joint efforts that Israel and the Palestinians were making to resolve their differences, and stood to damage prospects for the intense ongoing diplomatic efforts to give new momentum to the peace process. While the United States Government was of the view that the Fourth Geneva Convention of 12 August 1949 applied to territories occupied by Israel since 1967, it opposed the specific reference to Jerusalem in those resolutions.

16. ***Mr. Macedo*** *(Mexico), Chairman, took the Chair.*

17. **Mr. Al-Thani** (Qatar) said that Israel was seeking to change the demographic situation in the occupied territories, and for that reason the nature of its policy towards the population of those territories remained unchanged. The establishment of settlements, particularly in Jerusalem, was seriously damaging the peace process. The measures being taken by Israel were a gross violation of international law, the Charter of the United Nations and the Fourth Geneva Convention. There could be no talks until the Government of Israel halted its actions, which were undermining the peace process and posing an obstacle to confidence-building in the Middle East. His delegation called upon the international community to exert pressure on the Government of Israel with a view to ensuring Israel's withdrawal from all the occupied territories. A serious concern was the financial situation that had resulted from the decline in contributions and which affected all spheres of social and economic life; in that regard, it was necessary to find the means of appropriating additional resources.

18. **Mr. Adwan** (Jordan) said that his delegation agreed with the reasons, cited in various reports, for the deterioration of the social, economic and humanitarian situation in the occupied territories. Israel's actions not only posed a threat to the daily lives of the Palestinians but also infringed on their freedom of religion and freedom of movement, their right to education and to health, and in general violated internationally recognized human rights. As a result of those actions, the Palestinian people was being

subjected to unjustified collective punishment, which was a violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention and other relevant basic international instruments. That did not contribute to the creation of favourable conditions for the acceleration and completion of the peace process, nor to a spirit of cooperation or confidence among the population.

19. His delegation wished to reiterate that the most serious source of tension and concern was Israel's pursuit of its policy of establishing settlements in the West Bank, and its confiscation of land and annexation of Jerusalem and other Arab territories. In that regard, Israel was not fulfilling the obligations that it had assumed under the Israeli-Palestinian peace agreements. Its decision to expand the municipality of Jerusalem was not conducive to the security that both sides were seeking to establish. Jordan was committed to peace, and its only strategic goal was the implementation of all the necessary conditions to ensure peace. It hoped that the agreements reached at Wye River would help strengthen and accelerate the peace process. In conclusion, his delegation called upon Israel to treat the Palestinian people as a partner in the peace process, a partner that aspired to peaceful coexistence on the basis of equality and good-neighbourly relations. The Palestinian people must have an opportunity to exercise its right to self-determination and establish its own State in its own territory.

20. **Mr. Tekaya** (Tunisia) said that the latest report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories (A/53/136 and Add.1) once again contained information that demonstrated Israel's unwillingness to abandon its practices, which were a gross violation of human rights and, in particular, of the provisions of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949. Israel was continuing those practices in spite of numerous United Nations resolutions on the subject, and in spite of its own obligations, including those it had assumed in agreements with the Palestinian Authority. The information in the report gave a clear picture of the scale of the measures that Israel was taking, and also of Israel's stubborn determination to pursue its policy of colonization in the occupied territories. Arab land including agricultural land, continued to be expropriated for the construction of new settlements and the expansion of existing settlements and the building of bypass roads and economic installations for the exclusive use of the settlers. Such expropriation deprived the people of the occupied territories of their livelihood and encouraged their forced migration. At the same time, Israel had introduced exceptionally harsh restrictions on the building and expansion of housing for Palestinians. Israel's decision to extend the municipal boundaries of Jerusalem was a matter of the most serious concern; that decision sought to force Palestinians out of the City and to alter Jerusalem's cultural make-up and demographic structure. The construction of new settlements in occupied East Jerusalem and in the rest of the occupied Palestinian territory had been considered in the previous year by the Security Council and also at the tenth special session of the General Assembly, which had adopted a resolution demanding Israel's immediate and full cessation of the construction in Jebel Abu Ghneim and of all other Israeli settlement activities, as well as of all illegal measures and actions in Jerusalem.

21. Another problem in the occupied territories was Israel's discriminatory policy against the Palestinian and other Arab population with regard to water supply. In many places, settlers had preferential rights to the use of water, while other inhabitants suffered from a severe water shortage. Restrictions on the freedom of movement of Palestinians and their property had also been introduced. The policy of blockading and closing territories, including Jerusalem, was continuing; that policy had extremely serious economic and social consequences for the Palestinian population. The Israeli authorities also continued to make use of collective punishment, including the demolition of homes, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture and, in a number of cases, even murder. Children as well as adults were victims of Israel's violent practices.

22. The Special Committee's report indicated that Israel's policies and practices had an extremely adverse effect on the daily life of Palestinians and other Arabs living in the occupied territories. Israel's continuation of such actions was precisely the reason for the persisting tension in the region and for the instability of the Middle East peace process. In that regard, his delegation highly commended the activities of the Special Committee, which was an independent and unbiased body that informed the international community of the true state of affairs in the occupied territories. It was extremely important that the Special Committee should be able to work as long as Israel continued its illegal occupation of Arab lands and until Israeli policies and practices in those territories were halted. One of the basic principles underlying the Middle East peace process was the establishment of an independent Palestinian State with Jerusalem as its capital.

23. **Mr. Mansour** (Lebanon) said that the Lebanese people continued to suffer from the presence in their territory of Israeli forces being used for the advancement of Israel's hostile expansionist policies. Under Israeli pressure, hundreds of thousands of refugees had abandoned Lebanese territory, and current Israeli practices in the occupied

territories continued to produce difficult conditions of everyday life for hundreds of thousands of Lebanese. Shelling of civilian targets and other acts of war were continuing, with the use by the Israeli forces of various types of weapons, including ones prohibited under international law.

24. Violations of human rights were continuing, including those agreed under the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of 12 August 1949. The residents of southern Lebanon and the western Bekaa Valley were or might be subjected on a daily basis to varying types of violence, from killings, arbitrary arrests and torture to confiscation of property and demolition of homes. Collective punishment was also a widespread practice. The problem of inequality in distribution of water resources had also become serious, since settlers received water for agricultural needs on preferential terms, to the detriment of the Arab population. Settlers also received preference in the use of new connecting roads, which were being built on land confiscated from Arabs. Such conditions were characteristic of the western Bekaa Valley and all of southern Lebanon, including the occupied Syrian Golan. Recently the list of illegal Israeli activities had grown to include yet another violation of international law, which consisted in the removal from the occupied territories to Israel of fertile soil layers in order to increase the fertility of the soil in Israel itself. That practice, which would have highly negative consequences for the ecology of the occupied territories, deprived the population of their means of subsistence.

25. Despite the international community's firm condemnation of Israeli aggression against Lebanon, Israel stubbornly continued its illegal practices. He requested the international community to demand that Israel should observe the resolutions of the United Nations and other international organizations and end its illegal occupation of the Arab territories, thereby giving the needed impetus to the current peace process. The effective development of Lebanon and the other Arab countries of the region would be impossible without peace, which could be achieved not through a basic policy of "fait accompli", but by fulfilling the will of the international community and the principles of law and justice. Only a lasting peace would guarantee an end to human rights violations, oppressive practices and arbitrary rule on the part of Israel.

26. **Mr. Wehbe** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that throughout the 31 years which had elapsed since the beginning of the aggression launched by Israel in 1967, resulting in its occupation of the Syrian Arab Golan and the Palestinian territories including Jerusalem, Israel, the occupying Power, had stubbornly continued to defy international law and to violate the relevant General Assembly resolutions demanding the withdrawal of Israel from the occupied Arab territories, in accordance with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), not to mention the tens of other resolutions adopted by the General Assembly with a view to the establishment of a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East. Israel, for all those years, had adopted practices which had blatantly breached international law, the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations, international humanitarian law, particularly the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of 12 August 1949, the Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and resolutions adopted by international and regional committees and organizations concerned with human rights, in particular the Commission on Human Rights.

27. The importance of the work of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices had increased. The relevant United Nations bodies must provide assistance to the Committee by placing at its disposal all the required facilities to enable it to fulfil its noble mission, particularly by providing skilled professional staff with the expertise to follow up on the technical work of the Committee. His delegation expressed its dissatisfaction at the delay in the submission of the Special Committee's report to the Fourth Committee, which was a breach of General Assembly resolutions stipulating that reports must be submitted at least six weeks before their discussion in a Main Committee of the General Assembly.

28. Since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 2443 (XIII) of 19 December 1968, which had established the Special Committee, Israel had persistently refused to cooperate with it, disregarding the positions of Member States. The human rights situation of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan had worsened as a result of Israel's intensification of oppressive and terrorist policies and practices. For years, Israel had deliberately violated all international instruments and resolutions, striving to establish Jewish settlements in the Golan. It was worth mentioning in that context that the Israeli occupying forces had expelled the Arab inhabitants, which in 1967 had totalled 130,000, and more than 244 villages and farms had been demolished. The occupying authority was still planning to build new settlements and expand existing ones in the Syrian Golan. Approximately half a million Syrian refugees from the occupied Golan, expelled from their territory in

1967, were still awaiting repatriation and return to their homes. By contrast, the number of Israeli settlers in the Golan was increasing. Currently the number of settlements in that area had reached 40, despite the peace process initiated on the basis of Israeli withdrawal from all occupied Arab territories.

29. The Israeli occupation authorities had expropriated 96 per cent of the territory of the Golan, limiting the scale of construction in the five remaining Syrian villages, restricting construction permits and levying high taxes that the Golan residents could not pay. They had taken measures that had sabotaged the environment in the Golan. According to information from the World Bank and the Danish company Kikentrol, Israel had dumped 52 tons of nuclear, chemical and industrial waste in the occupied Arab territories, implying an environmental disaster in the Middle East.

30. Within the framework of the Israeli policies such violations as arrests, torture, forcible entry into homes, imposition of an obligatory place of residence and preventing Syrian citizens from visiting their families and relatives in Syria were occurring. Scores of Syrian citizens were in Israeli prisons, where they suffered inhumane conditions and brutal treatment. The Israeli policies of human rights violations, oppression, terrorism and religious persecution were directed against the Palestinians, who were struggling for the restoration of their inalienable rights, including the right to self-determination and the establishment of a State in their territory, and were exercising their right to defend their land and freedom. The report of the Special Committee enumerated the offences committed by Israel against the Palestinian people. They called in question the fate and future of the peace process, as well as the fate of one of the most important principles on which it was based, namely "land for peace". It was crystal clear that Israel did not want a genuine, just and comprehensive peace. It sought to achieve a peace that would serve its own interests and preserve the occupation that allowed it to control the Syrian Golan and all the other occupied Arab territories. To that end, Israel continued to pursue policies that violated fundamental human rights and disregarded international humanitarian law. Since the current Israeli Government had taken power, it had tried to torpedo all the achievements arising out of the discussions held since the Madrid Conference. He referred in particular to the failure of that Government to observe all the agreements and commitments entered into by the previous Israeli Government. The international community must continue to condemn Israeli policies and practices, must not acknowledge any measures taken by the occupying authority in the occupied Syrian Golan or extend to it any cooperation, and must take the appropriate steps to put an end to those measures.

*The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.*